

Has the greasing time come?

Yesterday, August 9, Brock Weir soberly ruminated on the healing power of laughter. Exactly forty-four years before Richard Nixon somberly resigned as President of the United States.

This coincidence reminded me of an article that my New York friend, Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007), published in Harper's Magazine in November, 1972. It was about the convention that nominated Nixon for his aborted second term in office. It bore the title: "In a Manner That Must Shame God Himself."

In it, Kurt took notice of the irrepressible radical, Abbie Hoffman (1936-1989), who had somehow acquired "Press Credentials." He said he was covering the event for Field and Stream. Kurt admired Hoffman's satirical humor, but he predicted that Abbie wouldn't be clowning around much longer.

Kurt said that some people think laughter is corrosive of "cruel social machines." He regretfully thought otherwise. When, he said, powerful social machines discover how to govern effectively by suppressing natural empathy and learning to ignore agony, then humour will become ineffective. It will merely grease the wheels of tyranny.

I've been watching Seth Meyers, Trevor Noah and Stephen Colbert for some time. Their nightly mocking of President Trump has neither slowed nor stopped (never mind reversed) the madness. Has the greasing time come?

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